

The Oracle

Volume 3, Number 2, February 13, 2002
Bigyani Das, Editor

[http:// toastmasters.gsfc.nasa.gov](http://toastmasters.gsfc.nasa.gov)



The mission of a Toastmasters Club is to provide a mutually supportive and positive learning environment in which every member has the opportunity to develop and leadership turn foster self personal



which every opportunity to communication skills, which in confidence and growth.

Toastmasters International

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Editorial

Bigyani Das, CTM

We have multiple roles to play. Some roles are attached to our life and some roles we choose for ourselves. How can we balance our life with all these roles?



With the evolution of new technology our jobs have become easier in some areas. However, with this easiness, comes the headache of multiple roles. We now involve ourselves in many activities that we could not have imagined before two decades. Although it's alright to



involve us in many activities and perform many roles, but sometimes it becomes a complete mess. We find ourselves in a situation where we don't do anything perfectly and most of the works are incomplete.

So, what can we do to optimize our productivity in the roles we choose? We have become Toastmasters with a goal to become good speakers and effective communicators, but there are so many things on our table. We just don't have time to prepare a speech or even attend the meetings?

Can we organize ourselves with a little more thought? I had the opportunity to listen to Sam Horn last week who gave a beautiful speech on "How to Concentrate". I would recommend you all to read her book "Conzentrate". Probably we can find ways to meet all the demands on us and adjust our time to play perfectly on our multiple roles.

(Our Goddard Toastmasters Team also participated in the GSFC Fall Fun Run Event as a group. Congratulations for a great Team Spirit).

Goddard TM at 30!

Michael K. Heney, CTM

We've reached (actually, passed!) the halfway mark in this Toastmaster's year, so this seems like a good time to look at where we've been and where we're going. More than anything else, Toastmasters is about the people in the club. This was especially evident at our Christmas party in December, which included a surprise "roast" of long-time Toastmaster Chris Scherer, who retired from NASA after a long and distinguished career. We had a wonderful turnout, with a number of current and former members of our Toastmasters family showing up to reminisce and wish Chris well in his retirement. Fortunately for us, Chris didn't retire from the club, and we look forward to seeing him at meetings every now and then!



Our Humorous Speech and Table Topics contests were held last August, with Chris Scherer as our Table Topics winner, and Jeff Bolognese taking the crown in the Humorous Speech Contest. Jeff proceeded to take Goddard Toastmasters to new heights, winning the Area 42 and the Division D contests to earn a spot in the District 36 contest. By taking third place in the District contest, Jeff became the first person from our club to bring home a trophy from that level. Congratulations to Jeff and Chris for their successes!

Coming up soon are our Spring contests - the International Speech and Evaluations contests. The winners will advance to the Area 42 contest in March - and hopefully continue on to Division D, District 36, Region VII, and finally the finals at Toastmaster's International Conference this summer! These contests are a lot of fun, and provide an opportunity to test your skills as a speaker and as an evaluator. We'll be exchanging "model speakers" for the Evaluation Contest with our sister club, "Space Speakers", which meets off-site just down the road for us. So get that word processor fired up, start developing a topic, and participate in these contests!

Last year, Goddard Toastmasters was named as a Select Distinguished club for reaching 7 out of 10 goals in the Distinguished Club Program. We have a chance to repeat that performance this year. Two of the goals are administrative; and we will complete those items. Last year, we had five (5!) CTMs awarded, which counted as reaching two goals (2 CTMs/goal). This year, unfortunately, we don't expect to have any CTMs awarded; everyone who was close to a CTM finished last year! (We should be setting ourselves up nicely for next year, though!) On the plus side, we expect to have one, and maybe two, ATMs (Advanced ToastMaster) awarded, and these count as one goal met each! We'll have two CL's (Competent Leaders) awarded - the paperwork is in the pipeline as I type; and we will hopefully meet the "four new members" goal. Becoming a "Distinguished Club" (meeting 5 of 10 goals) is almost certain, and repeating as a "Select Distinguished" club is well within reach with a bit of effort from all of us!

Our Toastmasters club is in good shape; there are a few things we can do to help make it stronger. First, remember why you joined Toastmasters in the first place. Toastmasters is a participatory organization, and the health and success of the club depend on the energy we each put into it. We can't coast on the efforts of a few; this is a group

operation. So come to meetings, sign up for roles during each meeting, and SPEAK! Next, share Toastmasters with your co-workers and friends. Let them know that we exist and what the club has done for you, and encourage them to join us! (That way, there will be more people to spread the work around to!) And finally, consider stepping forward and serving as an officer. Part of what Toastmasters offers is leadership training; and we have 7 officer positions to give people a chance to take advantage of that. Given the size of our club, people should on average hold an office once every 3-4 years. There's no requirement that you be an experienced member - and there's no "get out of jail free" card for having served some years back! Elections are coming up in May, so *do* consider holding an office for 2002-03.

As always, we meet every 2nd and 4th Wednesday in Building 28, Room N210 from 11:30 to 1:00 - I look forward to seeing you there!

* * * *

The Renaissance Toastmaster

By Jeff Bolognese, ATMB/CL

If I were elected Emperor of Toastmasters, my first act, after changing all the curtains in the royal residence, would be to abolish the CTM as we know it. But why, you may ask. The CTM is a great program. The 10 speeches in the manual are well thought out and provide a nice, incremental path toward improving your speaking and becoming a competent speaker.

Competent SPEAKER. Aye, there's the rub.

Toastmasters is more than just public speaking. We pride ourselves on being a complete package: A one-stop organization that can provide individuals with public speaking skills, evaluation skills, meeting management and leadership skills. But how is that complete package represented in the CTM, or even the ATM or other awards?



It's not, and I think that's a shame.

My proposal is to create a new recognition level. Let's call it the RTM or the "Renaissance Toastmaster". The RTM would encompass the current CTM requirements. There has been a great deal of work put into the basic manual, and, even in my infallibility as emperor, I wouldn't presume to change that. There would be only one additional requirement for the RTM. The RTM would require that, in addition to successfully completing all 10 basic speeches, the RTM aspirant must also perform all meeting positions at least once. RTMs would have experience in every job slot from Word of the Day to Toastmaster of the Day.

The reason for this is that each of those meeting jobs, no matter how small they may seem, teaches us a new skill or gives us insight into how and why Toastmasters works. For example, here are some of the skills and insights each job fosters:

Word of the Day - Expands our vocabulary. WOD causes us to think about how and why we use certain words.

Thought of the Day - A chance for a mini speech. It's kind of half way between a table topic response and a speech. It's also a great opportunity to work out a new skill such as reading a passage or a poem or using props or improvising, on a small scale.

Toastmaster of the Day - Meeting management and organizational skills. TMOD teaches us how to organize a meeting, put together an agenda, and introduce speakers and how to keep a meeting on schedule. Who among us can do without any of those skills?

Table Topics Master- Creative questioning. There's more to TT than just asking a question. Being TTM causes us to think about how to construct questions and dialogs that are easily understood and elicit interesting responses. It can be one of the most creative parts of the TM program.

General Evaluator - Focuses us on the "Big Picture". The GE develops some of the same skills as the TMOD and also puts us in the position to analyze the flow and organization of the meeting as a whole. We learn how to evaluate the entire "system" of a Toastmasters meeting.

Evaluator - Constructive evaluation skills. Listening skills. Evaluation skills are some of the hardest to perfect and some of the most useful. By learning to evaluate other speeches we gain insight in how to evaluate our own presentations and how to accept the evaluation of others.

Grammarian - Forces us to think about how we use the English language. Grammarians causes us to think about not just what is grammatically correct, but what is the most effective way of communicating. Effective use of grammar heightens our abilities to communicate.

Whisker Counter - Um's and Ah's are the bane of just about every speaker. Being the whisker counter improves our listening skills. It causes us to focus on how, why, and when we use verbal crutches and gives us insight into how we can eliminate them in our own speaking.

Time Keeper - Timing is everything. We've all been in one-hour meetings that finish up in two hours. Toastmasters is very deliberate in assigning time limits to different parts of the meeting. Learning how to keep within time limits is a skill that everyone appreciates but few people master. Being the TK not only helps club members to improve their timing, but also makes us appreciate the importance of running a tight ship, chronologically speaking.

Those are just some of the skills that full participation in a TM meeting can provide. And that's why I think the CTM should be abolished and the new RTM standard should be approved. Toastmasters is more than just public speaking, and there's more to public

speaking than just talking. So, until I'm elected emperor, why not take the initiative and strive for an RTM on your own. Sign up for every job available. Don't think that you're not qualified. We learn by doing, especially in Toastmasters. Every TM meeting is an opportunity for growth and every job is a new skill to learn and hone. You CAN do it all, and you'll be the better for it. Be a Renaissance Toastmaster!

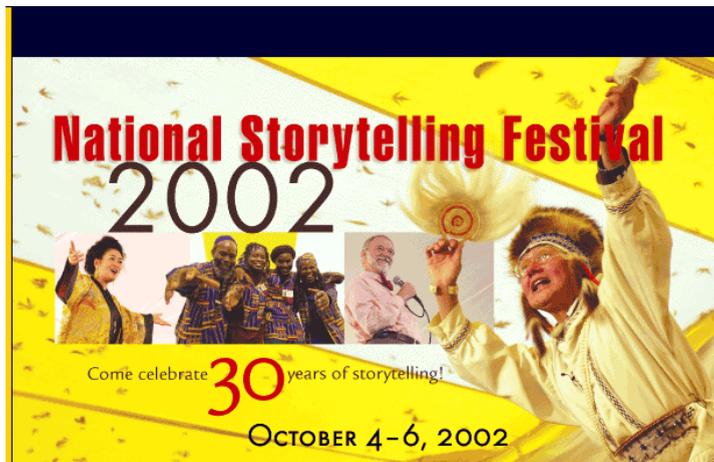
Now, if I can just pick out those curtains...

Story Time?

Don Moore, CTM

Lately, several members in our club have elected to follow either the Storytelling or the Interpretive Reading manual. For me this is a great treat as I have always been a fan of storytelling. The ancient tradition of storytelling in Native American culture is perhaps the dominant image that comes to my mind. I see a large camp fire, surrounded by buckskin and feather clad men, one older man with a headdress, his face illuminated by red-orange flames, eyes wide and hands held up in graceful gesture while the others sit cross-legged around the fire ring in rapt attention. The chief is telling a story about the wind and the moon and a noble deed of great courage.

Of course many ethnicity around the globe include storytelling as an integral part of their culture: African American, Chinese, Scandinavian, Eskimo -- the list is long. In fact, there are very few ethnic populations that do not celebrate some measure of storytelling. This tradition has served mankind



through time to provide examples of moral behavior and consequence, to pass along ethnic and tribal histories and to entertain.

About fifteen years ago, my wife, stepdaughter and I made a trip to the National Storytelling Festival; an annual event held the first weekend in October in Jonesborough, Tennessee. Having seen a piece on CNN years earlier about the festival I vowed that I would someday attend the event and experience the magic. My wife's interest and willingness for adventure helped transform the wish into a reality.

It was a long drive. Jonesborough is barely inside the eastern Tennessee border, just over the southwestern edge of Virginia. I never appreciated just how big the state of Virginia was until we made that diagonal crossing over its longest dimension from the Washington, D.C. area. It seemed that we were never going to reach our destination. Finally, the Smoky Mountains came into view (the first I'd ever seen them) and I realized instantly why they were called the Smokey's. They actually looked sort of fuzzy. I turned on the radio and twisted the dial and heard strains of banjo picking from a local bluegrass station. I was beginning to feel the magic.

Once into Tennessee (it was growing dark by now), we negotiated some very poorly marked highways, first going one way, then the other, and feeling totally lost and confused. We finally blundered into the campground where we had reserved a spot. While struggling to set up our tent in the dark, my stepdaughter, who was very young at that time, fell off the picnic table and onto the ground with a thump. This was followed by her cries, an expression of both fear and indignation. I had trouble making sense of the stack of tent poles and that wasn't helping either. We were off to a shaky start.

The next morning we awoke and the sun was shining. We discovered there was a beautiful lazy river on the edge of the campground. After breakfast we gathered our necessary belongings and made the short trip into town. Jonesborough is a very old city by American standards and it was all a-bustle with storytelling fans from across the nation. We bought our tickets and entered the grounds. When we passed through the gate, we stepped into a magic circle that began that morning and lasted for three whole days. We became captives of its rapture.

There were performers a-plenty: a cowboy poet, a Scottish storyteller, an Appalachian storyteller, a Jewish humorous storyteller and comic, musician storytellers, black history storytellers; even amateurs could have their moment in the sun at the "swapping grounds" -- I was overwhelmed. I can't remember another time in my adult life when I was so happy and thoroughly enchanted. It was everything I had hoped for, and more.

One of my most vivid memories is that of the ghost story session. My wife refused to participate (she's easily spooked). Instead, she and my stepdaughter attended a special evening musical session by Cajun musician and storyteller J.J. Renoux. The ghost session was held on a small knoll with a stage at the foot. The area was lit only by candlelight. There were three performers: A woman who had written a book about haunted places in an Alabama town, a woman from Martha's Vineyard who told of two personal experiences where she encountered inexplicable events and visions that had both intrigued and frightened her (and us), and a Scottish woman that I'd seen perform earlier that day in another venue. All three were very good, but the Scottish woman, Gwenda Ledbetter, I think was her name, literally sent chills up my spine as she related a story about a young couple who foolishly decided to spend a night in reputedly haunted house.



In her recitation she built the suspense gradually leading the carefree couple step-by-step into an uncertain and foreboding situation. At the climax of the story she described an otherworldly specter that appeared in that house, threatening the lives of the young couple. There was something about her description that haunts my thoughts to this very day. A simple reflection is enough to send a cold spark through my nervous system and give me goose bumps. There was something so terrifyingly familiar yet impossible about its form and its movement.

My memories of the other stories and the performers that told them also remained with me for a long while. Some yet remain. I have delighted others in telling what I could remember of these stories, albeit imperfectly. There is something about the telling of a story, watching your audience lean forward in their chairs, hanging on every word that

provides a great sense satisfaction. It is rewarding to know that you have, in some measure, managed to both conjure and pass along the magic so that it may in turn be passed to others.

A story is immortal. A story is an instrument; wielded by its handler much like a musical instrument is played by the musician. There is a craft and a love of the instrument, a love of its voice that can only be perfect by practice and careful attention to the clarity of its expression in the hands of the player. There is a beauty in the power of a story that is well told. There is a comforting reassurance in knowing that all the members of your audience for one brief slice of time, all share the same vision and experience the same emotions. Perhaps its real significance is in a story's ability to remind us that we are essentially all of one family, one tribe, one nation, and one humanity.

The Psychology of Criticism

Contributed by Paul McCeney, ATM

(This is a speech given by Dr. Mary Wade, a clinical psychologist, at a Toastmasters educational session on August 12, 1978)

I feel like I'm in a group of friends, because the previous two speakers, while perhaps not calling themselves psychologists, certainly used the tools of the trade and have given you some very good psychological and sound advice this morning. Since we're speaking about criticism, let's define the term to start with. First of all, Webster defines criticism as "the art or act of criticizing," which is really redundant. He further defines it as "a discriminating judgment," which I like a little better, but then he follows that with "severe or unfavorable or as a principle or root for judging anything." Now just as background, let's begin with the historical background for psychological theory. To begin with I'm not going into all the in's and out's.

There are two principal psychological theories, which are given to explain criticism and its effect on human beings. One is propounded by Alfred Adler, who was a contemporary of Sigmund Freud, whom you remember broke away from Freud soon, because he didn't believe in the ideas which were being propounded by Freud. It was his theory, among other things, that people do things because they want to improve themselves. So he came up with the idea of inferiority and superiority.



Now most of you, I'm sure are aware of these two terms, because they got bandied about for a number of years. We say "That fellow has an inferiority complex" or "That fellow has a superiority complex," but this was not what Adler had in mind.

Adler would accept what people think today of superiority and inferiority as a distortion of what he really was propounding. He maintained that all growth was the result of inferiority, so if you have those feelings, you are in the boat with the rest of us. As an example, he cited the case of the young child who attempts to emulate older children or his parents. Because the child feels insecure or inferior, he adopts the behavior patterns of those around him in order to be successful in everyday situations. In a sense we never outgrow this feeling of insecurity. As a result, we constantly search for new techniques

for solving everyday problems; you know that as well as I do. You're always looking for something new. But real growth stems from the realization that we are not perfect. We set ourselves individual goals, which when attained, give us a feeling of success, or superiority, to use Adler's term.

The second theory, which is often cited in explaining criticism, is the "flight or fight theory." Criticism appears to the individual as an attack upon his person. Now, consequently, he responds in much the same way as he would if a physical attack were being perpetrated upon his person. If he's a timid individual, which most of us are at heart, he withdraws from the situation, much as a physically weak person will turn and run when he's attacked physically. On the other hand, the strong individual will stand his ground and fight back when attacked. If the attack is verbal, he will vehemently defend his position or refuse to listen to the criticism being offered. He may withdraw physically from you or simply tune you out. Those of you that have teenaged children I'm sure are well aware of how this applies.

Neither solution is really ideal. Most of us have learned, largely through trial and error that certain people react in a given fashion when negative criticism is proffered. We're also aware of the fact that unless someone makes the effort to help us identify our failures that we keep on making the same old mistakes. This fact is certainly in agreement with Adler's theory of inferiority. Until we know what our weaknesses are, it's almost impossible to strengthen or eliminate them. Without the constant effort to strengthen our shortcomings, we cease to grow and, like many older people, stagnate.

How then do we overcome this tendency to resist criticism? If you remember, in our previous definition of criticism, there is a negative connotation. But this isn't the whole story. Criticism or judgment can be positive; and when delivered in a friendly manner, can leave the individual with a feeling of accomplishment. It's this aspect that is most frequently neglected when judgments or evaluations are made of an individual's effort. All this background is simply leading up to the idea that evaluations and criticisms can be synonymous. Most people consider criticism only in the negative sense. Therefore, the term "evaluation" is preferred in a learning situation, as it usually is assumed to be a weighing process, balancing the good against the bad or pointing out the areas of growth and those in which more work is needed. So, in most fields today, a critic or evaluator considers all aspects of performance in making judgmental statements.

How, you may ask, does all this fit into the Toastmasters' program? If I understand the contents of your organization, your primary purpose is to improve the public speaking ability of your members. Is that right? This is certainly a worthwhile goal, which reflects an awareness of an educational process. But before growth can occur, the areas in which one is deficient must be established. This is somewhat akin to a doctor's diagnosis of an illness. Until he knows what ails a patient, he'd be foolhardy to recommend a remedy.

Your evaluator stands in somewhat the same position as the physician. Until he has sufficient training and experience, he's not likely to be very helpful in pinpointing your areas of need. To carry the comparison one step further, the doctor must be able to inspire confidence in the patient and motivate him to take the necessary steps to accomplish a cure. In the same way your evaluator should be able to determine deficient areas in the individual member's performance and recognize the approach which will be most helpful and motivate the member to work on those areas.

One technique for evaluation is sometimes called the KISS technique. Usually you'll find this defined as "Keep It Simple Stupid." By using simple, understandable terms, speaking clearly and distinctly, the evaluator enables the individual to determine exactly what his weaknesses are. He can follow this with simple and explicit information on what steps to improve his speaking performance or the composition of his speech. This is constructive criticism and must be administered just as the doctor's prescription for prescribed medication, in small doses.

A second technique is termed the "Sandwich Technique". In this method the critic or evaluator first commends and recommends and finally commends. Granted it may be difficult at times to find something to commend, but an experienced evaluator always finds something the speaker has done right, if nothing more than smiling at the audience before he opens his mouth. It's unnecessary for the evaluator to know that the speaker may have smiled only because he felt that he was being silly even to attempt to speak in public. Whatever his reasons for smiling, the effect was to make him appear relaxed. The evaluator then takes the trouble to commend him for this. The speaker feels, whatever the reason, he has done something right. The evaluator can then proceed to point out areas, which need improvement and suggest ways in which this can be accomplished.

The experienced evaluator will speak slowly and distinctly so that his recommendations are clearly audible to the speaker. There's nothing more frustrating than to have someone mumble recommendations, and you get only part of what is being said. The speaker will need this evaluation.

The evaluator will end his evaluation by again commending his speaker. And he may refer again to the smile, if this is all he could find in the speech to commend him for. This type of evaluation leaves a novice with the pleasurable feeling that he's done something right and that he hasn't set himself an impossible goal.

I believe it was Franklin D. Roosevelt, who suggested that the speaker always observe the three B's--be prepared, be brief, and be seated. Similarly, a good evaluator should always observe the three C's. He should be concerned, not only for the speaker, but also concerned that he delivers his evaluation in a form that is acceptable. He should be considerate of the feelings of the speaker and considerate in his method of dealing with the deficiencies of a person. And last, he should be constructive, for without a recommendation, the evaluation fails its purpose.

Think, Think, and Think

Kathleen Fernandez

"It's not enough to talk to plants, you also have to listen." --David Bergman

Plants grow best when we pay attention to them. That means watering, touching them, and putting them in places where they will receive good light. They need people around them to notice if they are drooping at the edges or looking particularly happy in the sunlight.



The more attention a plant receives, the better it will grow.

We all need to be noticed in the same way. If we notice a family member or a friend is drooping, perhaps we can pay some special attention to him or her. All of us need someone to care about how we are, and to truly listen to us. We can share and double someone's happiness by noticing and talking about it also. We help the people around us to grow by listening to their droopy edges as well as their bright days. People need this as much as plants need light and water. Your thought for the day is: How can I help someone grow today?

Announcements

Our Club International Speech and Table Topics Contest will be held on February 27, 2002. Please participate and have fun.

January Meeting Minutes:

On January 9th meeting, Toastmaster of the Day was Mike Heney. We started our New Year's meeting with a few numbers of Toastmasters. The icy condition of the roads prevented many people to come to work that day. However, our small meeting was very enjoyable. Mike Heney had a new style of assigning different roles for members. He had enclosed different job assignments in different envelopes. We opened the envelopes to find jobs for us. Paul opened the envelope to give a speech off the cuff and he gave a beautiful speech on his ideas of new security measures that the Airport Authorities should use. Mike Heney made his presentation from the "Better Club Series" manual. Bigyani Das had opened the envelope for the Table Topics Master. She asked many questions on multiple roles. We had two guests, Igor and Wanda (who are now members) who also participated in the Table Topics Discussion and also entertained us. We enjoyed the meeting

from a new perspective of Family Gathering. We introduced each other and had a great fun.

Mike Heney was TMOD for January 23rd meeting. Steve Palm presented the thought for the day. The thought was based on our usefulness and effectiveness. There were two prepared speeches by Bigyani Das and Don Moore from the Story Telling manual. Don told the story of the newly married couple who met the end in the new house that was built specially for them. Bigyani told the story of a King and the Vampire. Martha O'Bryan led the Table Topics Discussion Her questions were based on "What" and "Why". Mike Riley was the General Evaluator. Don Moore was the best speaker, Jeff Bolognese was the best evaluator and Paul McCeney got the best Table Topics award.

President:	Mike Heney	Meeting Dates:	Every 2 nd and 4 th Wednesday of the Month
VP, Education:	Carolyn Ng	Place:	Bldg. 28, Rm E210 (90% of the time)
VP, Membership:	Kathleen Fernandez	Time:	11:30am-1:00pm
VP, Public Relations:	Bigyani Das	Contacts:	Any officer or the WWW at: http://snipe.gsfc.nasa.gov/~jeff/TM
Treasurer:	Steve Palm		
Secretary:	Mike Rilee		
SGT at Arms:	Don Moore		